

AmCham Monthly Meeting Remarks
Tuesday, May 15, 2012, CMR – 8:30-10:00

It is my great privilege to host the Annual AmCham breakfast for the third time. We will be doing something unprecedented when on June 21 we host a second breakfast to make sure you all have access to U.S. Commerce Secretary John Bryson, who will be visiting Poland for the U.S.-Polish Business Summit next month.

In three years of hosting the AmCham breakfast, I have had the privilege of traveling to every one of Poland's Vojevodships. And in most of these places, my ticket in has been the American Chamber, which is creating jobs and opportunity for people around this great country, from Gdansk to Gliwice, Krakow to Katowice, and from Warsaw to Wroclaw.

Since we arrived, you have made Elaine and me and our wonderful children feel so welcome. Our five-year-old daughter has now spent more than half her life here. And we are both so pleased to have returned to Poland, where my grandparents were born, where Elaine has worked as a journalist, and where I traveled as an advisor to Secretary Albright working with Professor Geremek to build the Community of Democracies, and where I traveled for the first time 32 years ago as a university student.

In traveling the world with the Secretary and others, I had the opportunity to meet with several American Chambers. Let me tell you something. Warsaw's AmCham is something else. Not only in the scope of the membership, but in the dedication of the members. Not only in the range of businesses you represent, but in the quality of your analysis, openness to different points of view, and your collaboration with organizations that other AmChams would consider unwelcome competition.

You do this and we do this because we all share the same goal: prosperity at home; prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic. We do this because it is good for us personally. But we do this more because it is good for our countries and good for the world we seek to build for ourselves and our families. We do it because the success of our model is being challenged. We know our model is the best and will succeed. Poland knows this as well as any country on earth. But when we look east, we see competing models. We understand where that can lead and we understand why it is important most of all today, for our economies to innovate, to compete, and through our example, to encourage others.

I won't speak long, because I want to hear your questions. But I must say a few words about our friends here.

Joseph Wancer, our chairman, is not to be underestimated. Your corporate background is ideal for this organization. You are building an AmCham for the 21st century, and it is my privilege to watch and learn from you. Executive Director Dorota Dabrowksa is not to be messed with. Give Dorota a job and she will get it done. Any organization would jump at the chance to have such an executive director leading with such precision and passion, and we are lucky to have her.

And you, the members, are an impressive group. Warsaw AmCham includes many companies that aren't often on many AmCham rosters. You join not out of charity, but because of the value you believe the AmCham provides you. Keep it up.

You do well by doing good, and I want to point to two initiatives of which I am very proud. The American Embassy has cooperated very closely with the Polish American Freedom Foundation, and I am now pleased that seven American companies, some of our most accomplished and famous firms, are giving Polish scholarship students, often from Poland's east and northwest, the opportunity to work alongside their American counterparts in summer enterprise internship programs in the United States. This is a program that Presidents Komorowski and Obama highlighted when they met in the Oval Office in December 2010. The next group of interns will be heading to the States in early summer, and we are hoping to host an event for them during the Business Summit. We have also been working closely with the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and I am very pleased that the second group of Poland's Top 500 Innovators are studying at Stanford University as we speak, applying their technical skills to commercial applications, and networking with colleagues in Silicon Valley. We all want greater opportunities for Polish talent to be exposed to America and American entrepreneurship, and we have made good progress. I know many of you next year are planning on joining PAFF's Enterprise Internship Program, and I hope others of you will do so as well.

Economic Statecraft is the new term the Department of State is using to describe what we do together every day. It's been an emphasis of this Embassy and my time here, and the success we have had is a tribute to you. We have sponsored two energy conferences with the Minister of Foreign Affairs in April 2010 and May 2011 to help create an open and realistic frame for the responsible development of unconventional sources of shale gas; an approach based on science and transparency.

Our economic relationship is strong, but it should be stronger still. America is the world's largest economy. Poland is the EU's fastest growing. Our two way trade is growing, increasing 25 percent since 2010, reaching \$7.5 billion. The U.S. asset base here is roughly \$30 billion, and some 400,000 Poles work directly or indirectly for American businesses. We are on track to meet President Obama's goal of doubling exports to Poland in five years.

But there is still scope for much greater two-way trade. As great as the interest is in Poland, there is still a lag in perceptions in the United States about the opportunities in Poland and, equally, a lag in understanding the opportunities for Poles to enter the U.S. market. This, in my view, is the main job of the Business Summit, which this group, the AmCham, conceived of and suggested to me prior to President Obama's successful two-day visit to Poland last May. You reminded me that President Bush held a successful meeting of government and business leaders. The President instantly took to the idea and one year later, we are one month away from the meeting.

We expect this to be a substantive meeting. This is a meeting to reach some agreements, and maybe cut a few deals. But it is also a chance to network; to bring the dealmakers and innovators from each of our countries together. And while we will have an excellent formal program, I expect a lot of the action will happen on the margins of the meetings. We will have an economic and commercial dialogue between the Ministry of Economy and the Secretary of Commerce. We will have a day-long series of plenary and breakout sessions. AmCham, Leviatan, and the US-Poland Business Council will present the findings of its excellent White Paper. And we hope to conclude agreements to institutionalize our cooperation, and also to give frank and open feedback about where problems are and what we can do to address them.

All of this happens against the backdrop of our bilateral relationship. We have accomplished a lot at a busy time for our countries: two Polish elections; the EU presidency; the Eurocup; not to mention the U.S. Presidential elections. But we should be proud at how we have taken our relationship to the next level, to a level that reflects Poland's greater voice in the transatlantic community.

Security is and always must be fundamental in our relationship and it is. Next week our leaders will meet in Chicago to discuss the future of NATO and to reaffirm our commitment to one another's security. The first continuous presence of American troops in Poland begins later this year, with the opening of an Aviation Detachment at Lask air base. This is a long sought Polish and American goal, which starts modestly, but holds great promise, and opens for business in just a few months.

Polish Air Forces will take part in the prestigious Red Flag exercises in Alaska shortly, and Polish F-16s are now NATO certified and ready for action. The day to day military cooperation between our two countries has never been closer, whether in Special Forces in Krakow, or the strategically important Ghazni Province in Afghanistan, where we fight side by side.

But our relationship is more than hard security. And in the last three years, thanks to you, we have elevated the importance of our economic relationship because without a strong economy, our countries cannot be strong.

So, thank you for your patriotism. Thank you for your creativity. Let's work as hard as we can to make June a success.

Zycze Powodzenia!